charge of 0.25% per annum on the undisbursed loan amount, the first payment becoming due together with the first interest payment.

(d) No, Sir. No individual official is considered responsible as the delay in drawal of the loan has been occasioned by a review of the scope of the project keeping in view the operational constraints of the Indian Railways and also the technological advances in recents times.

Sleeper Class Reservation from New Jalpaiguri

3769. SHRI DAWA LAMA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that sleeper class passengers cannot board in North East Express bound for Delhi from Jalpaiguri station;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Army and para-military personnels are forced to board in sleeper classes without any reservation, from N.J.P.; and

(c) whether Government would arrange one extra Military coach from N.J.P.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) No such complaint has been received.

(c) One General Second Class coach is exclusively earmarked by North East Express for Defence Personnel. Moreover, Railways always provide high priority to the movement of Defence personnel and Coaches/Wagons are immediately arranged for Defence related requirements.

Bring down the Expenditure incurred on Railway Operations

†3770. SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA:
SHRI RAJMOHINDER SINGH:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether certain possibilities have been explored by Government to bring down the expenditure to be incurred on railway operations;

(b) if so, the percentage of expenditure expected to be brought down with regard to the present railway operations expenditure; and

†Original Notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

© if the answer to part (a) above be in the negative, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In 1999-2000, various post-budgetary developments such as levy of cess and hike in prices of HSD oil, retrospective revision of tariff by some of the State Electricity Boards, higher rates of incentive bonus to workshop staff revision of family planning allowance, damage caused by Orissa Cyclone etc. had put an additional burden of around Rs. 900 Cr. On the Ordinary Working Expenses of the Railways. While the Ordinary Working Expenses of the Railways are not likely to reduce from the budgeted level, the Railways have been able to absorb the additional liability within the existing provision for Ordinary Working Expenses by implementation of an Action Plan aimed at reducing expenditure through economy and austerity measures in different areas.

(e) Does not arise.

Rent Concessions for Handicapped

3771. SHRI R. MARGABANDU: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) how many handicapped persons availed concessions for the years 1998-99 and 1999-2000;

(b) whether the Ministry has examined the genuineness of the handicapped certificates; and

(c) if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) The data in respect of the number of persons availing concession is not maintained. The information is being collected and will be laid on the table of the Sabha.

(c) and (c) Railways have no means to verify the genuineness of certificate issued by the competent Doctor / authorised person. If the certificate is duly filled as per Railways' guidelines, concession is granted across the counter. In an effort to avoid chances of misuse, the requisite forms of certificates were revised w.e.f. 1st January, 1999 and the provision of photograph of the concerned person on the certificate was also made mandatory.